

Winter 98
final exam

Exam due Tues 3 pm in my RTF mailbox (212 AMS), and e-mailed to me the same day. Anything coming in later will get an incomplete.

Write an essay of 10 -12 pp. on one of the following. You should refer to at least five articles/book chapters which you know well to back up your points, including your additional reading/screening. At least one of the five should be from the 'teens and 20's period, and another from the 40s and 50's period. You may want to use one or more films as major reference points for your argument. Check with Chuck on the films/tapes you want to use.

1. One of the major statements on art in the Western tradition is by the Roman writer Longinus who argued that good literature (and art) works to 'instruct and delight.' Discuss how this formula can be seen in the work of 5 different theorists studied in the course from five different decades.
2. Discuss various theorists who argue in one way or another that 'style creates meaning.'
3. One argument that can be made about innovative form is that it arises to deal with a new content. Discuss the development of the idea of radical form matching radical content with specific reference to one film, such as *Man With a Movie Camera* or 2 or 3 Things I Know about Her.
4. Specific social groups have often articulated their concerns with film representations of their group and concerns. Discuss how film theorists have contributed to this discussion and what issues remain to be addressed. You may want to work this out with some examples that demonstrate effective and offensive variations on the problem.
5. Discuss the concepts of self-reflexivity and defamiliarization as you see them in several theorists and different works. Refer to Dana Polan's essay, 'A Brechtian Cinema? Towards a Politics of Self-Reflexive Film' (on *Duck Amuck*) in Nichols, *M&M*, vol 2.
6. There is a long standing aesthetic position that holds art is finally ineffable. Linked often to ideas of its origins in magic, ritual, and religious expression. Romantic era notions of genius and creativity articulated by Kant, and Schlegel and Coleridge, assume the mind of the artist is the source of creation. This is an expressive theory which validates the artist, but which also finds the cognitive response of the audience a related phenomenon. It tends to treat art as a special realm not holding to the rules of verisimilitude and ordinary society, and it regards art experience as a unique aspect of human consciousness with art providing a special way of knowing. Discuss these ideas and how you see them developed and expressed in 20th Century film theory.
7. First articulated by Plato, is the idea that art is based on imitation (mimesis). Such a position leads thinking along the lines of how such imitation takes place and whether or not a work of art is adequate to the task. It is at the foundation of questions of realism and also ideas that the audience regards the work of art with the same general framework as it regards life. Discuss these notions of realism with particular reference to Bazin, but include consideration of how postmodern works such as *Meeting of Two Queens* might be considered from this perspective.
8. Unlike some other areas of aesthetic analysis, film theory has always developed with an understanding of film as an art and an aspect of commerce. The commercial entertainment cinema is always in the mind of film theorists, even if only negatively. How then have theorists dealt with the feature fictional dramatic film and its commercial basis? How have they discussed it as art? Discuss how you see this working out in five different theorists and offer your own position on the question.
9. Different theorists have understood specific aspect such as film sound or film editing in very different ways. Compare and contrast several views and develop your own analysis of one of these areas.
10. Film theory has tended to move toward the position that the audience has an important role in the completion or making of meaning in film communication. This has been developed with a new appreciation of pleasure as an element of film aesthetics. Discuss this in relation to a specific aspect such as the pleasures of a genre or the star.
11. Discuss the political motivations for realist film aesthetics and how they are worked out in different historical and

national and social contexts.